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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ADANA 000096

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR MAY 03, 2005

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for May 03, 2005. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

**RADIKAL / SABAH:** A Parliamentary commission as set up to investigate the fuel oil smuggling discovered that the number of loaded fuel oil trucks at the Mersin port does not match the number of trucks passing through the Habur border gate. Commission members also observed that despite the elimination of some of the problems on the Iraqi side of the border, there is still reportedly a 15-kilometer queue of trucks waiting at the Turkish side of the gate.

**CUMHURIYET:** Cumhuriyet quotes one of the members of the Parliamentary Commission investigating fuel oil smuggling as saying that processes at Habur border gate are plagued by corruption. Trucks are sometimes allowed to pass the gate without being inspected. The commission member also said that smuggling has become an ordinary activity in the region, since it yields better profit than engaging in activities such as animal husbandry.

**CUMHURIYET:** The trial of six young people who allegedly attempted to burn the flag during Nevruz celebrations in Mersin started yesterday. The court released the defendants pending the trial.

**CUMHURIYET:** The paper reports that the 1,800-kilometer BTC (Baku-Tibilisi-Ceyhan) pipeline's (reportedly 60,000) parts, especially at points where pipes are welded to one another, are highly vulnerable to corrosion. According to the report, the possible leaks from these parts may cause damage to the environment, and corrosion may cause high temperature explosions, as well.

**CUMHURIYET :** Ali Topuz, Deputy Chairperson of CHP's Parliamentary Group and member of CHP's "Commission for Assessing the GAP Project's Current Situation and its Future", said that GAP project should be redesigned and a new program established and implemented.

**RADIKAL / OZGUR GUNDEM / YENI SAFAK:** Twenty-one-year-old Cetin Kum was shot dead in Yukari Tulgali village of Van after allegedly not complying with a soldier's instruction to halt. Kum was reportedly trying to cross the border to smuggle fuel oil to Turkey when he was shot. Ozgur Gundem's report claims, however, that Kum was only grazing his sheep when he was shot. A delegation from the Van Human Rights Association examined the matter and prepared a report, which claimed that Kum was shot at close range.

**HURRIYET / EVRENSEL / SABAH:** The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) will announce on May 12th its decision regarding the case of Abdullah Ocalan, leader of the terrorist organization, PKK.

**HURRIYET / YENI SAFAK:** Iran, reported as being under international pressure generated by the U.S., is reportedly enhancing its trade relationships with Turkey. Both countries are readying to mutually decrease their customs tariffs. State Minister Kursad Tuzmen, currently visiting Tehran, stated that the products sold in the border trade areas will be increased and diversified.

**EVRENSEL / OZGUR GUNDEM:** A 7 p.m. curfew was reportedly imposed by the military in Uzungecit village of the Uludere district in Sirnak. According to reports, the curfew was imposed because 72 village guards refused to take up arms there when military operations started.

**ZAMAN:** The private Kurdish language schools in Istanbul, Diyarbakir, Batman, Van and Kiziltepe are reportedly suffering financial losses due to inadequate numbers of students. One of the owners of the schools attributes the lack of attention to the poor economic status of people and the intimidation that people cannot overcome.

**EKSPRES:** Organic citrus fruit production started this season in Vakifli, the Armenian village in Samandag district of Hatay, and has already yielded produce, pleasing the producers in the village. Berc Kartun, the muhtar (headman) of Vakifli village, said that his community is able to obtain healthy produce without applying chemical pesticides.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Ozgur Gundem reports that a 24-year-old PKK member, Adnan Batur, was allegedly tortured and killed after being caught and wounded on October 23, and another alleged PKK member allegedly suffered the same fate in March. (Note: Ozgur Gundem provides graphic descriptions of the state of the bodies as were reportedly discovered. End note.)

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